

San Jose to Merced Section High-Speed Train Project EIR/EIS

Updated October 2009



CALIFORNIA
HIGH-SPEED RAIL
AUTHORITY

About the High-Speed Train System

The California High-Speed Rail (Authority) is proposing high-speed train service for travel between major metropolitan areas of California. The 800-mile service would run from the San Francisco Bay Area and Sacramento in the north, through the Central Valley to Los Angeles, Orange County and San Diego in the south. This fast, safe and reliable system is forecast to carry 93 million passengers annually by the year 2030. Comprehensive program-level environmental studies to determine route and station locations were completed in 2005 and 2008, including how to connect the system from the Central Valley to the Bay Area. The November 2008 California voter approval of \$9.95 billion in bonds helped to move the program forward and project-specific environmental studies are now underway.

San Jose to Merced Section

In July 2008 the Authority selected the Pacheco Pass to San Francisco via San Jose as the preferred program corridor and alignment for this section. The program corridor extends approximately 125 miles, starting south of the Diridon train station in San Jose, where it connects with the San Francisco to San Jose section of the system, and running south through Gilroy and then east through the mountainous Pacheco Pass and to Chowchilla, where it connects with the Merced to Bakersfield section of the system. Stations are planned in San Jose, Gilroy and Merced.

Environmental Review Process

In February 2009, the Authority, in cooperation with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) began a project environmental review of the San Jose to Merced section per requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). "Scoping" was the first major step to help inform the public and agencies about the project and gather input on environmental-related issues, concerns, and interests to be studied. More than 300 people attended public scoping meetings in San Jose, Gilroy and Merced and the Authority received over 500 comments on a variety of topics. A scoping report summarizing this input is available in English and Spanish on the Authority's web site at www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov. Based on scoping comments, the Authority has identified a number of potential alignment alternatives and is analyzing and evaluating these to determine which ones to carry forward for environmental review. Public meetings to present and obtain input on these alternatives are planned for October 2009, with follow-up public meetings to occur in December to share refinements. The Authority will begin to study potential site-specific impacts and to identify mitigation measures associated with the program alignment, additional alignment alternatives developed during scoping, and a "no-action" alternative.

Program Alignment and Potential Alignment Alternatives Developed During Scoping



Purpose of High-Speed Train System

- Provide a new mode of high-speed intercity travel to link major metropolitan areas.
- Interface with international airports, mass transit and highways.
- Offer alternative transportation in a manner sensitive to and protective of the state's unique natural resources.
- Develop a practical and economically viable transportation system, with phased implementation that would generate revenues in excess of operations and maintenance costs.

Need for the High-Speed Train System

- Forecasted 40-50 percent state population growth by 2030.
- Increased demand for region-to-region transportation.
- Travel delays and traffic congestion on local highways and at airports at a cost of \$20 billion per year.
- Poor and deteriorating air quality and pressure on natural resources as a result of expanded highways and airports.
- Congestion costs approximately \$20 billion annually in wasted fuel and lost time for commuters.

System Benefits

High-speed trains will have many benefits.

- **Protecting our environment:** by eliminating more than 12 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Reducing dependency on fossil fuels:** by decreasing use by up to 12.7 million barrels of oil per year.
- **Enhancing the economy:** by creating as many as 450,000 permanent jobs in California by 2035 through the anticipated economic growth brought by the train system.
- **Making better connections:** by providing a safer, faster and more cost-efficient alternative to air travel; helping to relieve overcrowding at local airports.
- **Improving existing infrastructure:** by removing existing at-grade crossings, installing fencing, new signaling systems and additional tracks.
- **Providing passenger cost savings:** by providing lower intercity passenger costs than travel by air or auto.

Environmental Issues to Be Analyzed Include

- Transportation
- Air Quality
- Noise & Vibration
- EMI/EMF
- Public Utilities & Energy
- Biological Resources & Wetlands
- Hydrology & Water Resources
- Geology, Soils, Seismicity
- Hazardous Materials/Wastes
- Safety & Security
- Socioeconomics, Communities & Environmental Justice
- Local Growth, Station Planning & Land Use
- Agricultural Land
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space
- Aesthetics & Visual Quality
- Cultural Resources
- Construction Methods & Impacts
- Cumulative & Secondary Impacts
- Mitigation Summary
- Section 4(f) & 6(f) Evaluation
- Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The California High-Speed Rail Authority is committed to updating and involving the public during the environmental review for the HST. There are a number of ways you can learn more and get involved.

San Jose to Merced Section

Call: 800-881-5799

Visit: www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov – See the San Jose to Merced page under the Library

E-Mail: highspeedrail@circlepoint.com

Request a speaker: Please contact us if you are part of a community organization and would like a presentation or update at one of your meetings.

San Francisco to San Jose Section

Call: 510-587-8640

Visit: www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov - San Francisco to San Jose page under Library

Merced to Fresno Section

Call: 559-221-2636

Visit: www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov - Merced to Bakersfield page under Library

Para más información, por favor llame al 1-800-881-5799, o visite la Página Web www.cahighspeedrail.ca.gov

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